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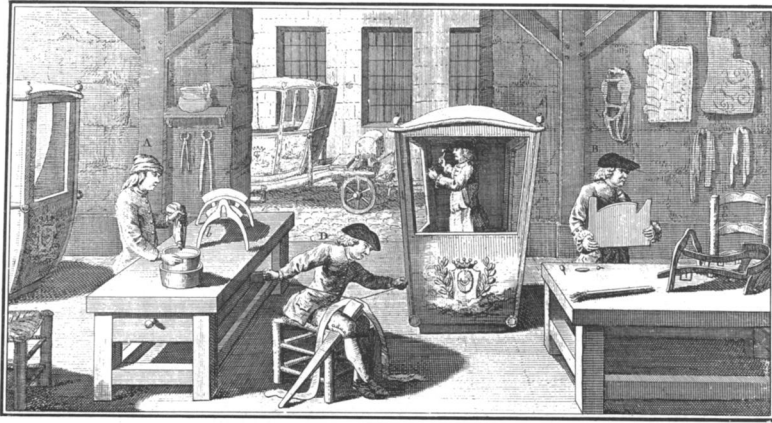
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INDUSTRIAL ART—A WAR EMERGENCY

WE speak of morale in the open fighting field, we count upon the morale of those at home in the service of production and supply, yet we have never realized that this term must be applied to every line of effort that engages our minds and hands if the national cause is to be served—even to the arts of peace upon which the country must so largely depend in regaining its equilibrium and normal course of life when the job over there is done. Have we ever considered the meaning of morale in the fine arts? We know well enough the response from agriculture and shipping and forestry and mechanics, but these are all war-serving branches, fields which are boomed to unprecedented proportions by the war, yet even among these what efforts are made to steel the nerves of all concerned for the great test of maximum service? This maximum service is based solely upon morale. How much greater is its value, then, and how much heavier the task, to establish in the war non-essentials that same fine fibre of continued effort and support when all involved must realize that their work and planning are not directed toward the West Front, but rather for the maintenance of the fabric of national art impulse, satisfaction, poise and peace of mind. In this the industrial arts serve among the greatest agencies of

national progress; theirs is a serious undertaking, to maintain morale in the face of almost impossible conditions, not only as to labor and materials, but as to design and taste.

The great April day which brought the word of our entry into the mighty conflict brought also an immediate patriotic response in many ways, all of which spelled service and helpfulness. But after the first rush to help came a time of reckoning up men and resources. True values were more correctly estimated and for the first time the industrial arts manufacturing fields clearly saw that their own short-sightedness had led them into the most serious handicap which any field connected with the fine arts could possibly meet. The machine had faithfully served them for many years, so faithfully indeed had it wrought their many forms and weaves that its owners had all but forgotten that the mechanism had no thoughts of its own. The war isolated the United States, and we counted among our resources machines galore, fine raw materials, excellent technical ability, but no designers and no schools to produce others to make good the shortage due to the occupation of Europeans in higher duties. True values thus demonstrated the real position of the machine, not as a thinking automaton, but as a glorified tool which might be misused as readily as correctly applied. Manufacturers who had long had ugly presenti-

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FROM AN ENGRAVING BY GRAVELOT

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ments as to what might happen if their industries should ever be isolated from European sources of supply as to design and taste, saw that the day had come before their preparedness program had had a chance to get under way. They had never advanced any educational propaganda, they had helped to found no schools, they had seen for many years the advantages only of the present, they had not built for the future of American industrial art. While an American harvesting machine was a prize for the European, an American industrial art object, with few exceptions, remained little more than a near-barbaric curiosity. These men have now seen in service to the nation an opportunity to make good, they are gradually coming to the realization that service means not only cash and patriotism, it means also constructive morale, the morale which builds for the great day when the army's work is done.

In working out their maximum service, however, the industrial arts manufacturers, the furniture and furnishings producers, have not thus far made direct and general use of some of the most obvious and most immediately available advantages that could be offered to any branch of production. To be sure, they have their problems of obtaining material, of holding labor to turn this over into executed pieces, of cutting down production in terms of fuel allowances, of turning over parts of their plants to the actual task of war material manufacturing. All these are practical services, practical duties that all of us have to shoulder in greater or less degree, each in his own way. But what has the manufacturer done in the field of design? Has he reached out for every possible avenue of assistance in the most important field of all, namely, that of improving the appearance and appeal of his pieces, so that he may aid in building up the cultural standard of the nation? What has he done to improve the calibre of his designers? Has he especially encouraged American designers? Has he considered the value of the possible trade mark: *American made and designed*? And finally, in the absence of schools for

craftsmen—the woeful lack of which the war has so plainly shown—has he made the great museum collections in our great cities a part of his working plant? Has he ever calculated the asset value of the museum in his city as an inspiration, as a source of information for design and actual models, as a center for study and research, in short, as an out-and-out working laboratory? It is safe to say that such a conception of the museum's function is a novel one from the average manufacturer's point of view. Now is his time to discover what the great collections throughout the country have to offer, what extensive arrangements have been made in the large museums to provide or make accessible the fine examples of the craftsmanship of other days. Now is his time to begin in a thorough-going way to make himself acquainted with the contents of these great galleries, with the finely organized resources for study, golden opportunities for his designers. There is but one demand upon his time, that of going to the museum; books he may have in his own office library, but the great collections of originals from which to inspire and model offer the resource of contour, color, and depth which the finest engraving and measured drawing can but remotely suggest.

We can only repeat, there is nothing highfalutin about a museum. There is nothing difficult or far-fetched about an exhibition of originals. To be sure, they cannot be handled, they are housed in a splendid architectural monument worthy of them, they must be under guard, and they must be perhaps in a structure located in Central Park as far away as Eighty-second Street. But does all this mean that their great value must be ignored? Glass cases and guardians are unfortunate necessities, but so are the locks on our doors, safeguards to guarantee the continued value of objects within. It is the duty of all concerned with the industrial arts, but especially of those engaged in their manufacture, to acquaint themselves with and make constant use of every facility which may improve American design, and the museum collection is the foremost of these facilities at the present

time. Furthermore, the museum is bound to remain the foremost of these facilities for the reason that without its resources even the schools of the future will be one-sided.

Hitherto manufacturers have rarely seen the value of taste as an asset; they have regarded their factory merely as a business venture, not as a workbench of national taste. They have not realized that every chair or lighting fixture or tile or yard of goods is a factor in the great mosaic of national culture in the industrial arts. The museum stands ready to help them to a better understanding, not as a patron, not as a big brother, but as a partner in progress. Splendid things have been brought together and made available, lending collections have been prepared, numbers of lantern slides and photographs are obtainable, large, well-lighted rooms with equipment are free to use on application, access may be had to the finest facilities in the way of fundamental inspiration and sympathetic help that have ever been extended to craftsmen and designers and manufacturers. These resources are ready to use, there is no red tape, there is no air of "institutionalism" and awe; there is only the desire to coöperate, to help, for the museum cherishes the highest ideals for the advance of American design. The museum maintains that "good enough" is no slogan for American manufactures in the industrial arts. The museum maintains that *Made in America* on an object of

furniture or furnishings is inadequate unless it also connotes *designed by an American-trained craftsman*. Above all, the museum has watched the growth of public taste among us, it has seen this taste gradually gain headway and outstrip the design quality of the manufacturer's output, and it has seen many a manufacturer make the discovery that what is easiest to get is not the best.

What will the manufacturer do to assure the progress of America along steady lines of cultural growth? Will he persist in the all-for-business course of quick turnover, or will he bend every effort to achieve the finest design the world has ever seen, because for America only the best is good enough. Like many others whom the course of events has taken aback, the manufacturer has learned that preparedness is the longest word in the dictionary, but it is not too late for him to make a bold effort to profit by the present isolation of the United States in the industrial arts. A direct aid is offered him in the Metropolitan Museum. An immediate effort can be and surely must be made to establish Americanism in design, to achieve that new craftsmanship which shall form part of the cultural heritage of the United States when its duties on the soil of France have been gloriously accomplished. It is the patriotic duty of manufacturers to provide the best design on earth for America; in this the Museum stands ready to help.

R. F. B.